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WARFARE VERSUS WELFARE

by Frank Chodorov

The Welfare State is headed for the moth balls. What with the concentration on the business of war, the tradition (built up during the past twenty years) that the function of the State is to provide for us, will be set aside. Whether or when it will be taken out again and put to use depends on the turn of events. At this writing, the Welfare State can be written off.

Welfare-ism presupposes a condition of relative peace. Estimates of what can be taken out of the general economy for handouts, or for the administration of handouts, are based on what can be produced for consumption. Since, however, war has first call on the productive capacity of the country, and can demand all above mere subsistence, these estimates are thrown out of kilter by it.

This is not to say that the Welfare State will be deliberately scuttled; it will simply fall into disuse. The laws, offices, desks, clerks and officials set up for the dispensing of old age pensions, educational subsidies, unemployment insurance and the rest will remain in being; and even though new machinery for the control and regulation of the economy will be set up during the emergency, the existing plant will not be dismantled. Operations will slow down for lack of appropriations.

Certainly, no new enterprise in welfare-ism will be undertaken. You will hear no more about socialized medicine, what with the doctors being drafted into the Army, and the crusade against racial discrimination in employment will be forgotten in the manpower shortage.

It has already been suggested (by the New York State authorities) that the high school period be cut from four to three years, so as to facilitate earlier conscription; the corollary effect of diverting taxes from education to war purposes is obvious, even if not intended. This must be taken as a hint of things to come. The Administration will surely drop its program for the subvention of elementary schools. From now on what is spent on education will be with an eye to its contribution to war; physics will be a desirable subject of study, philosophy will not.

The entrenched bureaucracy will certainly try to maintain unemployment insurance at its present level, but the need for labor will offset their demands. Some use will be found for the productive power of those

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drawing old-age pensions. The national emergency will make a shambles of the handout business.

The recent withdrawal of price support for eggs will be followed by the dropping of subsidies for other farm products. The war-created shortages will boost prices to the point where "parity" becomes ridiculous. Moreover, the need for agricultural products will make necessary the dropping of that part of the program that calls for paying farmers for not producing. Every acre in the country will be put to work.

In short, the claims of welfare-ism on the tax-dollar will lose all importance. Warfare comes first.

II

Speculation on the future of the Welfare State is weighted by the conditions brought on by the international situation. It is possible that the all-out war with the Soviet can be put off for some time; the Communists may not want it just yet. But, nothing is more certain than that we shall be for a long time on a war-footing, that our economy shall be geared to military preparations for years to come. During that time, or during the war, a new way of thinking and a new social order will replace the tradition of the Welfare State.

The idea of the Welfare State is rooted in the all too common desire for manna from heaven. It is because of this strong demand for something-for-nothing that the do-gooders and the planners are able to do business. But, however strong is this demand, it is overshadowed by the will to live. If the conditions of war threaten existence, the urgency for safety will drown out the urgency for "security".

In a small way, we have had an indication of this instinctive emphasis on existence. In the past year the newspapers have recorded a rise of land values in sparsely settled and even in desert and mountainous areas, indicating a strong decentralist tendency. This development is explained on several grounds: as a hedge against inflation by investors, as making provision for subsistence when jobs become scarce, as an escape from the dangers of the atom bomb. The last reason will gain in importance as war becomes more imminent; we can expect this trek to the hinterland to gain in volume.

A basic economic principle is at work. When industrial and commercial wages fetch less in satisfactions than what can be extracted from the soil, the latter becomes more attractive than the office and the factory. One must live. The "back to the land" movement today is basically economic. Well, then, as taxes combine with shortages to

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reduce purchasing power, factory workers turn to their garden patches to supplement income, while others go in for farming as an occupation.

If the war is long drawn out, if the bombing of our cities becomes more than a threat, the search for a haven of safety and a certainty of subsistence may well become the national habit. The transplanting of women, children and the aged will be undertaken as a war measure, but the economics of it will accelerate the dispersal of the population. Keeping in mind the lowering of our economy by a war of attrition, the disruption of our productive machinery and a ruinous inflation, we may be on our way to a new tradition: self-sustenance and self-reliance. Out of the war can come a habit of living that will have no place for the Welfare State.

It is true that England, despite the bombing of her industrial centers, took up where she left off with welfare-ism. But, could England have done it if she had not had help from the outside? Without this help she could not have attempted a return to ante-bellum fancies; she would have had to go to work. Who would help us?

III

During war, of course, the Omnipotent State takes over. The Welfare State rests its case on the paterfamilias concept of Society; the political establishment undertakes to alleviate disabilities by confiscating and distributing wealth, but in theory it does not deny the right of private property or violate personal prerogatives. The Omnipotent State, on the other hand, puts its own purposes above those of the individual, and therefore must not only deny private property but all freedom of action; Society becomes a tool, not a concern, of the State. When national existence is at stake, the latter idea gains in ascendancy; Society abdicates in favor of the State as a matter of necessity.

History indicates that the powers acquired by the State during a national emergency are not usually relinquished when it is over. Absolutism is the product of war. Thus, if we go by the evidence of history, it may be that our Welfare State will be transformed by the war into a continuing Omnipotent State.

On the other hand -- again assuming that the war, or mobilization lasts long enough to establish new ways of life and new traditions -- it is entirely possible that economic decentralism will be followed by political decentralism. The dispersal of the population on a large scale will automatically make for a weakening of the central authority, partly because a self-sustaining citizenry resents interference, partly

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because the large centers will lose their dominant position. The city has always been the backbone of the strong State, the country has always been the opposition. Consequently, if the war draws large chunks of our population to the land, an American State after the pattern of Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four may be averted.

The sinews of the State are taxes, and taxes are limited by the productive capacity of the people. The productive capacity of the people is, in turn, in proportion to the capital structure at hand; the more and better tools at the disposal of the worker the greater his output. So, if the war absorbs and destroys a considerable part of our capital structure, our productive capacity will be diminished and the revenues of the State will dwindle accordingly. A war of attrition, therefore, is a threat to the State itself. And if, during such a war, we acquire the habit of self-sustenance, it is a certainty that the State will have hard going to re-establish its position. An agricultural economy yields little in the way of taxes.

If this is so, it may be argued, then Russia is in no position to carry on a war of attrition. Her economy has been on a war-footing since the Communists took over in 1918, and her capital structure must be only what slave labor can yield under the lash. That is true. She probably has squeezed out of her slaves a striking force of considerable strength; having spent it, she would be hard-pressed. There is reason to believe that a continuing threat of war, with sporadic demonstrations by her satellites, would suit her purposes better than an all-out struggle. Meanwhile, a continuing threat of war will have the same effect on our economy as a war of attrition.

IV

For the time being -- and that is the point of this argument -- the Welfare State is out. In the immediate future the direction of the American State will be toward the acquisition of power for war purposes, not eleemosynary purposes. The tendency will be more and more toward totalitarianism. That is unavoidable.

The ultimate is difficult to foretell. Will totalitarianism settle down on us as a continuing way of life? The pessimists are of that opinion. On the other hand, we cannot underestimate the power of tradition. Maybe the American tradition of individualism will rise up and smite totalitarianism hip and thigh. All the totalitarianism of the past finally succumbed to the will for freedom.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events Vol. III, No. 2

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By Frank C. Hanighen January 10, 1951

STATE OF THE UNION SPEECH: The President's address to Congress Monday offered nothing new: the same imprecations against Russia and Communism, the worn-out phrases about "a community of free nations", "foundations of collective security", etc. etc. In no place did the President answer the objections of Taft and Hoover. It is true, some foreign observers here perceive a shading of a conciliatory nature, but this is not the view of American observers. They interpret the foreign policy section of the speech as a continuing defiance of his critics, and indeed of majority public opinion which seems to be on the side of Taft and Hoover. In doing so, he has forfeited a chance to offset the mounting political prestige of Taft in the forum of American opinion.

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TRUMAN OFFERS OLIVE BRANCH: In respect to domestic policy, however, Mr.Truman's message to Congress is quite the most conciliatory that he has offered in years. Missing from its text are the caustic darts which so often have aroused the Southern, and now dominant, wing of his Party to cold fury. Whether the message will serve to assuage the ill feeling that is growing rapidly between Majority Leader McFarland and those Senators who supported him for this position, and the northern wing of the Party which declines to accept defeat in good grace, remains to be seen. Mr. Truman's Party is in a difficult position in the Senate, and only some masterly strokes for unity can save the situation. Quite evidently Mr. Truman had this situation in mind when he addressed the joint session.

The 10-point legislative program put forward met with the approval generally of Democrats and Republicans. Emphasis was on unity, which Mr. Truman followed up by declaring that economy must be practiced in non-defense spending, and that many normal activities must be curtailed or postponed. Strict Administration adherents called the message "marvelous and uplifting". Southern Democrats supported it with the exception of what they called "socialized domestic programs", and Republicans found some reassurance in the expressions of conciliation and single purpose.

Several things appearing in previous utterances to joint sessions were missing from this message. Mr. Truman did not ask for repeal of the Taft-Hartley law, or as so often in the past, characterize it as "unworkable". He met the Republicans right on their home grounds by asking for improvement in labor laws to ensure stable labor-management relations and provide for steady production. This recommendation might well have been taken from any one of Senator Taft's speeches over the last four years. Neither did he define what he had in mind for "improvement in labor laws". In the broad generalities that were used, repeal of the present law can be urged at any time. Civil rights legislation and passage of FEPC were not mentioned.

Truman called for action on his health insurance plan and for laws to meet what he called "the high costs of modern medical care". But socialized medicine was not definitely touched upon. He asked for expansion in social security safeguards, but did not depart from what is the accepted definition of this plan now.

In its healing words and phrases the message should go far toward cementing a better relationship between Mr. Truman and Congress, or at least the majority party leadership. But much depends on the additional messages relating to taxes, economic controls, military draft, and rearmament which Mr. Truman will soon send to the two

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houses. Even a slight departure from the tone and level of the initial message can arouse schism among Democrats on the Hill and friction between Mr. Truman and the new Congress.

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TAFT AND HOOVER: "Liberal" journalists strive to give the impression there is a difference between Taft and Hoover policies on foreign affairs. Actually there is none. Taft lashed out at the campaign of misrepresentation of Hoover's famous speech.

---- A new sign on the Baltimore-Washington highway reads: "Heed Hoover".

---- A stenotypist employed by Taft was present at the Senator's speech to the National Press Club (January 9). Reason: to protect Taft from distorted reporting of his remarks. Reporters too often over-simplify their versions of his statements, omitting important qualifying clauses and "shadings".

---- Significantly, strong applause followed Taft demands for release of Chiang Kai-chek's troops for action against Chinese Communists.

---- Taft will not take the vacant post on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (which may go to Bridges). He wants to be free of those off-the-record "briefings" by which the State Department is wont to close the mouths of members of that Committee.

---- There is a rumor that Mr. Hoover has readied another speech, even tougher than the last one.

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EISENHOWER: Senator Taft (on the Meet the Press program, January 7) expressed doubt that Eisenhower would definitely be commander of the European army, emphasizing that the General's present trip is merely for a preliminary survey. Reports which we have received from some who have talked with the General in "shirt-sleeve" sessions confirm the Taft remark. These say that it is by no means sure that the General will stay in the post and that because he has gone on what is called a "preliminary survey" does not signify that he will continue after the survey is completed. Eisenhower's references to his mission -- our informants say -- are couched in very tentative terms, with many "ifs" and conditional clauses. There is a feeling that he does not view his mission necessarily as one of years, but rather one of months.

It is now recalled, in this connection, that General Eisenhower in his press conference in Washington on January 4 by no means gave the impression that he was irrevocably committed to the European army program. When he was asked by reporters as to his reaction to the former President's speech, he replied that he could not comment, adding, "Mr. Hoover is not in uniform and I am."

As a matter of fact, some political observers in the Capital interpret rather cynically the General's role in the present situation. They think that he was "boxed" by Truman when the latter virtually drafted the General for the job of European commander. Ike could not very well decline. Some incautious enthusiasts for Eisenhower's political future thought that he had received a golden chance to clean up the European mess in two years and to return the conquering hero, ripe for assuming the Presidency. Actually, Ike knows a good deal about the European military situation and may well doubt that the affair which he has been asked to head is as simple or of as certain success as enthusiasts say. He is also capable of appraising the direction of the political wind. After a few months in Europe, he can better chart his course. Then he can see which side in the great debate over foreign policy is winning in the American forum: and make his decision accordingly.

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A SUCCESSOR FOR ACHESON: In the highly political atmosphere of the re-assembling of Congress, it is inevitable that the search should go on for the name of the man whom the President might choose as a new Secretary of State. Chief Justice Vinson, John

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Foster Dulles and Paul Hoffman lead this verbal poll. But now we choose to report another, hitherto unmentioned name; not because we support the bearer, but because it is a name raised with nods of assurance in certain high places where knowledge of such matters as cabinet appointments has been good in the past.

The name is that of former Senator John Sherman Cooper of Kentucky. Mr. Cooper is at present dividing his time between the practice of law in Washington and service as a U.S. delegate to the UN. Long ago, he was classified as a GOP "liberal", and bracketed with Senator Wayne Morse, Senator Margaret Chase Smith, etc. It would be difficult to recall any occasion when he has criticized State Department policy.

Some will be surprised to learn that he is reportedly a favorite of Mr. Dean Acheson himself. Is that so surprising? Not at all, according to our well-informed sources. Mr. Acheson, they say, realizes that his days are numbered, but wishes to resign only if he can name his successor; and Mr. Cooper is the man. We report the above with the caution that, with Mr. Truman who must make the decision, no cabinet appointment is certain until it is formally announced.

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BARKLEY: The Senate faces a heavy load of business this session, and that fact suggests to many who are fond of its genial presiding officer the following anxious question: Will Vice-President Barkley soon take a Florida vacation? No one around the Upper Chamber would begrudge him a rest, for everyone thinks he needs it. At Democratic Headquarters it is being said that faithful Alben over-strained himself during the campaign, rushing from one end of the country to the other, speaking in behalf of his Party's candidates. And the lame duck session cut off a well-earned rest. The Vice-President is no longer young and people are remarking that he looks far from well. Therefore, in the cloakrooms there would be no surprise if President pro tempore Kenneth McKellar (of Tennessee) would have to take over the gavel for perhaps a month, while Barkley enjoys rest and recuperation.

Mention of Barkley's age recalls a little-noticed column by Arthur Krock in the New York Times on December 29, 1950. During the holidays not as much serious attention was given to this piece as it deserved. Mr. Krock's discussion served to remind readers of how the presidential succession statute was amended in 1947; and how in the new order of this succession, Speaker of the House of Representatives Sam Rayburn is now No. 3 and Senator McKellar, President pro tempore of the Senate, is No. 4. In age, the President is 66; Barkley is 73; Rayburn is 68; and McKellar is 81. Krock remarked that the succession statute, as last amended, could in the next two years "devolve the Presidency on men who are elderly by any standard". Members of Congress would do well to give this some thought. They have talked much about the dangers attendant on a breakdown in health of the President (recalling the instance of the late F.D.R.). They would do well to elect officers of their respective bodies who show reasonable signs of the capacity to bear the burden (excessively heavy in these strenuous times) of the office of Chief Executive.

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FEDERAL BAN ON SPEED: A reaction wholly different from what was evidently expected is greeting the recent magazine stories that a type of General Motors car will be capable of 150 miles per hour. Although the new car is described as still in the experimental stage, highway authorities of several states who are struggling under traffic loads that tax the capacities of their arterial roads, and with the highest accident and death rate on record, are appealing to House and Senate members for Federal laws to require mechanical speed limitations to be built into automobiles while on factory assembly lines. Roads do not exist, and cannot be built during the period of rearmament, for more speedy cars, the state officials say. The matter is coming up soon before Chairman Johnson and the Senate Commerce Committee. Two members of this Committee are Majority Leader McFarland and Majority Whip Johnson. State officials say their own legislatures cannot deal adequately with the matter, because most automobiles engage in interstate travel.

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REVISION OF OFFICIAL HISTORY: During the holidays, the American Political Science Association held a convention in Washington and the proceedings passed off in relative peace. There arose no significant dissents from the norm of the prevailing political attitude of the professors in this field, which one of those attending described as "mildly pro-Truman". Some members assert that a Leftist steam-roller has eliminated any other vocal body of thought in this group. But there was not this same serene picture at another gathering of educators -- the concurrent meeting of the American Historical Association in Chicago.

At the latter convention, two historians on December 29 sharply challenged the official view of our entrance into World War II -- Professor Charles C. Tansill of Georgetown University, and Dr. Harry Elmer Barnes, former Professor of History at Smith College. Tansill, whose book on our entrance into World War I is well known, accused President Roosevelt "of allowing an unalerted Pearl Harbor to be attacked even though he knew the attack was coming; of paving the way for Communism's present death grip on China by turning Japan into an enemy of the United States, and then, in World War II, destroying Japan as a bulwark against Russia". Dr. Tansill went on: "If Japan could be maneuvered into firing the first shot, America could enter a crusade on two fronts. Thanks to the breaking of the Japanese code, Roosevelt and his coterie of advisers had advance knowledge of Japan's intention to strike."

As reported in the Chicago Tribune (December 30), Dr. Tansill gave a long, half-century review of American policy in the Far East, in which he utilized hitherto unpublished data from State Department archives, ending with an arraignment of U.S. policy in the Thirties. Roosevelt and Hull, Tansill claimed, "forged an economic chain around Japan that crushed every chance of understanding between the two countries. From China came frenzied appeals for American intervention in the struggle in the Far East. Roosevelt replied with the ultimatum of November 26, 1941, to Japan with its insistence that all Japanese troops be recalled from China. This was an invitation to war and the President realized all its implications."

In an ironic aside, Tansill sketched the inglorious role of General Marshall in this moment of history: "The burden upon General Marshall was tremendous. On the morning of December 7 he took a time consuming horseback ride. It was one of the most significant canters in all history. He was riding to sacrifice and not to save American lives." And Tansill went on in similar vein: "It is one of the great ironies of history, that America hastened into war under the impact of impassioned appeals from Mme. Chiang Kai-shek to save her native land. She did not realize that the path to Pearl Harbor would lead to betrayal at Yalta. She knows now that Franklin D. Roosevelt placed all his big promises to the Generalissimo on a 'slow boat to China' that he knew would never reach a safe harbor."

Professor Ruhl J. Bartlett of Boston offered a rebuttal to Dr. Tansill, terming as "a nonsequitur of classic proportions" the assumption that "The United States is to blame for Japan's denunciation of the Treaty because it refused to permit Japan to violate it".

Dr. Harry Elmer Barnes directed his attack on "court historians" who had done government work during and after the war and had fortified the history profession and the public against revisionist theories. "The attitude of the public during war time has been maintained by means of propaganda", said Barnes. "The United States is likely to undertake the third crusade before it is fully aware of the real causes and disastrous results of the second." With revisionist historians hamstrung by unsympathetic publishers and smear artists, Professor Barnes said, "the very existence of historical science is being threatened" and can only be saved by publishing the facts "before the chains are fastened on us and the lock is closed. . . . A robust revisionism is our only hope of deliverance, if there be one, at this late date."

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